DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 292 336 FL 017 253

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TITLE Improving Foreign Language Teaching through Innovative Recruiting and Training.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 10p.; In: Lalande, John F. II, Ed., Shaping the Future of Language Education: FLES, Articulation, and Proficiency. Report of Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Language; see FL 017 249.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Innovation; *French; Institutional Cooperation; Language Skills; *Language Teachers; Second Language Instruction; *Spanish; State Departments of Education; Statewide Planning; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Recruitment; Teacher Supply and Demand
IDENTIFIERS *Colorado

ABSTRACT

In 1983, Colorado began a project to augment its pool of qualified French and Spanish teachers, enhance the foreign language programs of participating schools, improve the skills of French and Spanish teachers already teaching, meet the need of isolated rural districts, and develop alternative and accelerated teacher certification. A task force was formed to recruit teacher trainees among targeted groups of individuals and in districts willing to sponsor an internship placement. Seven French-language and 12 Spanish-language participants from three school districts were selected. The participating schools derived benefits including the design of a foreign language program improvement/enhancement plan, an additional resource person provided at low cost, opportunity for staff and students to work with an intern with a unique background, on-the-job training for potential teachers, opportunities for faculty workshops and in-service credit, and recognition for their contribution. Three divisions of the University of Northern Colorado cooperated to develop individualized academic programs for the participants, with the assistance of the Colorado Department of Education. Fourteen of the participants will become newly certified teachers, and five will return to their teaching positions with additional credentials and improved skills. (MSE)

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Improving Foreign Language Teaching through Innovative Recruiting and Training

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Introduction

"A Collaborative Partnership to Improve Foreign Language Teaching in Middle and Secondary Schools through Innovative Recruiting and Training," a $145,000 grant of the United States Department of Education, has been funded through the Office of Federal Relations and Instructional Services of the Colorado Department of Education. This article reports on the current progress of this project.

Background

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In 1983 the Colorado Board of Education initiated "Operation Renaissance," a project that called for the formation of task forces to study the educational programs in the state. The Foreign Language Task Force made several recommendations, one of which was to suggest that steps be taken to prepare additional teachers of foreign languages to meet the demands of the future. A grant proposal, submitted to the United States

Department of Education for the Secretary's Discretionary Fund, was designed to meet that need.

There were two main goals of the grant: (1) to augment the number of qualified French and Spanish teachers in the state, and (2) to improve and/or enhance the foreign language programs of the schools that participate in the project. Subsidiary goals were these: (1) to improve the skills of those already teaching French and Spanish who have minimal qualifications, (2) to meet the needs of small, isolated rural districts, and (3) to develop a model for alternative and accelerated teacher certification programs. The project runs from January 1987 to June 1988. Twenty highly qualified participants were to be selected; each received stipends of $1,125 per quarter from grant funds while enrolled in a full course load of university study (2 quarter maximum), and stipends of $1,250 for a twelve-week internship paid by the sponsoring school district.

Before designing the proposal, the Colorado Department of Education researched the need for foreign language teachers in the state. The information received from school districts and universities revealed that because of increased student enrollment and a limited applicant pool, there was indeed a need for more certified teachers of Spanish and French. The data formed the framework for the proposal design.

Implementation

The first step in the implementation of the project was the establishment of the Recruitment Task Force. There were two areas for the recruitment efforts: (1) individuals who were interested in becoming certified teachers of Spanish and French, and (2) school districts that would financially sponsor an internship placement. Leaders from foreign language organizations throughout the state, as well as school district foreign language supervisors and personnel from the Colorado Department of Education, were called upon to develop strategies for the promotion and publicity of the project. Organizations notified their memberships about the grant and identified potential applicants. Targeted groups for applicants were: (1) university-educated immigrants,

(2) graduate or undergraduate language majors who were not previously intending to become teachers, (3) public school teachers currently teaching French or Spanish along with their endorsed subject matter (the subject listed on their teaching certificate, usually the university major), (4) teachers with proficiency who were not teaching the language, and (5) those teaching in private schools where certification is not required. School districts were contacted by the state foreign language consultant to solicit their participation.

At this time the management team to administer the grant was selected. The grant activities are under the leadership of Arvin C. Blome, assistant commissioner of education of the Office of Federal Relations, and are a part of the Curriculum and Instruction Project, supervised by Boyd Dressler. The director of the grant was to be a successful teacher of Spanish or French with a master's degree or equivalent in foreign language pedagogy and content, with fluency in Spanish or French, and with demonstrated leadership ability. Jan Herrera serves in this position. There are two university-based codirectors, Kathleen Y. Ensz (French), and Lynn A. Sandstedt (Spanish), professors at the University of Northern Colorado with extensive experience in teacher training and foreign language methodology. The foreign language consultant of the Colorado Department of Education, Mary Apodaca, an experienced teacher of French and Spanish with fluency in both languages, expertise in foreign language pedagogy, and knowledge of foreign language study in Colorado, completes the team.

Application materials and procedures were developed. The Recruitment Task Force then initiated a publicity campaign that resulted in much interest in the program. Two very successful publicity endeavors were undertaken: publication of a front-page article in "Education Colorado," the Colorado Department of Education newsletter sent to all public school teachers, and the development and distribution of an informational brochure. The management team received forty applications, and thirty-five additional inquiries were made. All of the seventy-five respondents were given information about teacher certification, available university courses, and career counseling. Applicants were required to submit the following documents: application form, letter stating interest, background, and commitment to foreign language instruction in Colorado, résumé, transcripts, and letter of recommendation.

Upon receipt of the completed application materials, the project director conducted an interview with each applicant. One of the major concerns of this interview was to determine the applicant's understanding of the American education system, experience with American youth, and to ascertain probable success for integration into an American classroom. An unofficial oral proficiency interview in the target language was given, and an interview was also held with the appropriate university-based codirector. The Selection Committee, composed of the project team and a representative from the Recruitment Task Force, was dedicated to identifying quality candidates who would successfully meet the required standards of teacher certification through the challenging schedule of the accelerated program. The committee considered the following criteria in its final selection of the participants:

1. Ratio of Spanish and French participants
2. An unofficial rating of intermediate proficiency on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages/Educational Testing Services Oral Proficiency Interview (Higher ratings did not ensure selection.)
3. Adequate communication skills in English
4. Potential success in the program
5. Commitment to foreign language teaching in Colorado
6. Potential as a successful Spanish or French teacher at the middle or secondary school level
7. Successful interview—enthusiasm, sincerity, ideas, ability to articulate desire to participate, and understanding of American culture, especially teenagers

The Selection Committee chose nineteen finalists, who included seven French and twelve Spanish participants. These individuals represented varied and rich backgrounds. Preparation for a teaching certificate represents a major career change for those participants who came from careers in ranching, missionary service, banking, paralegal and prelaw, and homemaking. Four participants were university-educated immigrants who were teaching at the university level or were continuing their own studies, while five were teachers of other subjects in the elementary or secondary schools.

School districts with strong foreign language programs and master

teachers were invited to participate as sponsors of an internship. They were asked to provide the $1,250 stipend to be paid to each participant whose internship is a requirement of the certification program. The school district received many of the following benefits from their participation in the program:

1. Design of a Foreign Language Program Improvement/Enhancement Plan to be implemented by the resources of the grant
2. Advantage of an additional resource person at low cost
3. Opportunity for staff and students to work with an intern who has a unique background
4. On-the-job training for potential teachers
5. Opportunities for faculty for workshops and in-service credit
6. Recognition for the district, school, and master teachers for the contribution to this national model

Many schools were very supportive of the project. The Cherry Creek School District #5 of Englewood, Cheyenne Mountain School District #12 of Colorado Springs, and Mapleton School District #1 of Thornton enthusiastically accepted the opportunity to be a part of the grant and funded a total of eight internship placements. Other schools were also interested but financial constraints did not allow them to make the monetary commitment. The participating schools are Cherry Creek High School (4 interns) and Overland High School (2 interns) of the Cherry Creek district, Cheyenne Mountain Junior High (1 intern) from the Cheyenne Mountain district, and York Junior High School (1 intern) of the Mapleton district. Three additional internship placements were needed to meet the needs of the study plans of the participants. Two districts in the Colorado Springs area, School District #11 and Academy School District #20 will each host one intern with the expense of the stipend paid by grant funds and without all of the benefits of a participating school. A third placement of this type will be arranged for the spring.

All of these schools have outstanding teachers of French and Spanish, who have been recommended by their administrators. Master teachers will receive recertification credit and will be invited to attend all of

the workshops and seminars of the project. They will also be instrumental in designing the Foreign Language Program Improvement/Enhancement Plan, which affords their school the opportunity to request resources and consultation for desired projects. The interns will be matched with their master teachers, and the field experience will be administered and evaluated by the university-based codirectors.

The University of Northern Colorado's Role

The University of Northern Colorado (UNC) was selected as the academic institution of the grant because of its outstanding tradition in teacher preparation.

Once the candidates were accepted into the project, the academic portion of their programs had to be formulated. This planning involved three divisions of the university: the Graduate School, the School of Education, and the Departments of Foreign Languages and Hispanic Studies. Because the great majority of participants already held a B.A. degree in Foreign Languages or some other discipline, they were admitted to the university as nondegree graduate students. They could be divided into three categories. The first group included those who held nonteaching Liberal Arts degrees in either French and/or Spanish and who needed the required pedagogical background for certification. The second encompassed those who held nonteaching degrees in other disciplines accompanied by a strong background and proficiency in French and/or Spanish and who needed not only the pedagogical training but also additional hours in French or Spanish in order to be certified and endorsed by the state or at least to have accrued the twenty semester hours necessary for approval by the North Central Secondary School Accrediting Association to teach French or Spanish. The final group consisted of those individuals who were certified and endorsed to teach at the secondary level in another discipline and who had previously accumulated some hours in French or Spanish at the undergraduate level. The project allowed these students to complete the work equivalent to a B.A. in the language or the twenty semester hours necessary for North Central approval. The Graduate School processed all of the candidates' credentials and forwarded their dossiers to the School of Education and to the project codirectors in French and Spanish for determination of

needed coursework. Because of the varied experiential and educational backgrounds of the participants, the directors had to design programs that were highly individualized in order to meet the needs of each participant.

This program-design procedure required frequent meetings between the codirectors, Lynn Sandstedt and Kathleen Ensz, and the Assistant Dean of Education in order to determine the pedagogical needs of each participant and which of those needs could be met through formal classwork and which could be waived based upon documentation of previous work or educational experience. None of the traditional standards or requirements for teacher certification was lessened. The only changes made were in the method of delivery of required courses.

The codirectors developed special foreign languages–oriented pedagogical workshops, which were also approved by the School of Education as alternatives to required courses in the Professional Teacher Education core. In order to expedite the participants' progress in the program, teacher aiding and clinical experience, normally separate requirements, were included as part of the paid teaching internship (equivalent to student teaching). Interns worked under carefully selected master teachers and were supervised by the codirectors of the project. Participants were required to take a full-time or half-time internship depending upon prior teaching experience. Coinciding with the internship programs, the codirectors taught a series of courses specifically related to the teaching of foreign languages. These classes were offered during evenings and weekends in order that all participants could attend. All master teachers were invited. The topics covered in these courses were a historical overview of teaching strategies in the foreign language classroom, an oral proficiency familiarization workshop, achievement testing in the foreign language classroom, developing strategies and activities for communication, and integrating culture into the daily lesson of the class. Guest speakers and panelists addressed the topics of classroom management, application for a teaching position, and a potpourri of teaching activities and strategies that have been proven to be effective in second language instruction. The development of the professionalism of the participants was strongly encouraged through the course, not only by the modeling of professional involvement of the instructors, leaders of the project, panelists, and speakers,

but also through an awareness of the benefits of participation in the professional organizations of the state, region, and nation. Those students needing additional work in French and Spanish were required to take courses in the annual UNC summer institute, which is especially designed to meet the needs of secondary school teachers of foreign languages. In some cases, this additional study necessitated further coursework during the 1987–88 academic year.

Because of the variety and complexity of each participant's course of study, individual contracts were drawn up. The contracts were created to clarify expectations and to ensure the continuous progress of each student throughout the eighteen months of the project. They included a list of all courses to be taken and other certification endorsement requirements. The contracts were then approved and signed by the project directors, the codirectors, the assistant dean of the School of Education, and a senior consultant of the Certification Department of the Colorado Department of Education.

The Role of the Colorado Department of Education

The resources of the Colorado Department of Education have been very valuable in the development of this project. The Certification Department continues to provide accurate answers to the many questions about the requirements for the internship experience, the certification process, and required documents. The Field Services Department helped identify school districts where foreign language teachers were needed and where there were teachers without the required numbers of credit hours. This office has also provided publications on effective teaching techniques. The Accounting Department has administered all of the budget transactions including the letter of agreement with the University of Northern Colorado regarding the payment of stipends. The Colorado Department of Education has provided outstanding office facilities, support staff, and administrative leadership to the director of the grant, which have been key factors in the successful implementation of the project. The insightful contributions of the foreign language consultant have been extremely valuable and her services will continue to be a valued resource for the participants and schools.

Research and Evaluation

The Evaluation Department of the Colorado Department of Education has worked with the project team to design a research project and an evaluation plan for the grant.

The research project will include a study of the student teacher evaluations of prior French and Spanish student teachers from the University of Northern Colorado who were supervised by Ensz and Sandstedt. The same evaluation forms will be completed for the interns of the grant during their internship experience. The purpose of the study is to compare the success of the interns in the accelerated program of the grant with that of the students in a traditional university program.

The evaluation of the grant will be composed of the evaluations from all those individuals and groups who were involved. Personal and confidential interviews will be administered to the nineteen participants, the master teachers who supervised the interns, school administrators, and university personnel by the Evaluation Department. The purpose of the evaluation will be to determine which elements were successful and should be included in the model for future programs.

Outcome for the Future

By June 1988 there will be fourteen newly certified teachers of Spanish and French for the state of Colorado, teachers who have received outstanding training and very personalized attention and assistance. There will also be five teachers who are returning to their current positions with additional credentials and improved skills to enhance their teaching and to allow them to serve future expanded programs. The foreign language departments of several schools will have been improved or enhanced. In addition, hundreds of Colorado students will have enjoyed the opportunity to learn from dedicated, enthusiastic, and talented people.

The effects of the grant will not stop there but will continue as the plans for future programs of this type are implemented. One of the main goals of the project is to develop a prototype that will increase the supply of foreign language teachers. The model will be shared with the other states in order to prepare for a focus on the future.